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ABSTRACT

There are many ways and options available for children to publish their work, other than just writing for their teachers. This research summary discusses the benefits of publishing students' writing and ways that students go public with their writing: the author's chair, publishing individual authors, classbooks, classroom and school newspapers, and Young Author's conferences. It also discusses the role of technology and computers in publishing children's writing. It concludes that whatever the chosen method, teachers can rest assured that when they publish their students' work, they will not only see improvement in their students' writing skills, but also witness the students' sense of satisfaction and heightened self-esteem as they make their writing public. Contains 23 references and links to 3 Internet resources. (RS)

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Research Summary

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Various Methods of Publishing Children's Writing

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Introduction

The term "publish" means that a writer shares his/her writing with the public (Manning, 1998). To make writing public and more meaningful, a writer must have an audience (Simic, 1993). Simic (1993) notes that while students have always had the teacher as the critical reader, writing is often treated as an exercise, without the act of publication. Fortunately, there are many ways and options available today for children to publish their work, other than just writing for their teachers. This article will discuss benefits of publishing student's writing and ways that students go public with their writing.

Benefits of Publishing Student's Writing

The opportunity to share one's written work is an integral part of the publication process (Simic, 1993, p.2). Lund and Sanderson (1999) believe that young children enjoy sharing their written work, and that the sharing process allows them to "take information and synthesize and apply it in new ways" (p.2). In addition, sharing with others gives purpose and meaning to a student's written work, as well as provides an audience beyond the teacher (Reutzel & Cooter, 1996). Simic (1993) agrees, noting that:

> During publication, children can play both the roles of author and audience to other children's pieces. Instead of questioning the teacher, they can question each other for clarity of meaning. Children as authors use the ideas of their audience when revising their writing. As audience, they have the opportunity to see their ideas used by other students in their revised stories. Shifting from the author to audience and back encourages children to become perceptive readers and writers. (p.2)

These researchers clearly hold that publication is a vital tool which enables children to develop a stronger ability in both reading and writing skills. Publishing student's written work also gives the meaning and purposes for writing.

Publication Methods

1. Author's Chair

If publication can be defined as simply making writing public, then publication in its simplest form can be community sharing. Graves and Hansen (1983) describe a method of sharing, called "Author's Chair." Author's Chair can be utilized by virtually any teacher on any budget, making it a wonderful alternative for financially challenged schools which cannot afford more elaborate publishing methods. During an Author's Chair session, a place (a chair) and time is reserved for a student to read his/her writing aloud to other students. The writing could be a draft, a polished piece, a story, or an information article. After reading, the audience responds by posing questions and making comments regarding the writing. Hansen (1987) believes that such a process is critical for children to develop connections between reading and writing by sharing their written work and answering questions. In addition, this kind of sharing not only helps young authors learn to successfully communicate ideas but also helps them taken into account of the reader's perspectives (Simic, 1993).

2. Publishing Individual Authors

Manning (1998) in an article, entitled *Quick Ideas for Publication*, describes several easy, low-budget methods for publishing young children's writing. These methods include writing a parallel book based on a favorite story, drafting text for a birthday card, or making three-dimensional pyramids or other geometrical shapes from construction paper and using the panels for verses of poems or statements about a particular topic. In addition, matchbox-style books, small publications whose cover flips up to uncover short verses or sayings, are also popular and easy to make (Manning, 1998). Simply displaying writing on bulletin boards, classroom walls or in the halls or sending home stories for parents to read is yet another form of publication (Simic, 1993).

Publishing "real" books, Simic writes, is a "child-centered production" in which the student models the bookmaking process by designing the book cover, writing the story, and illustrating the text. Scott (1994) describes a bookmaking process which includes only laminated construction paper, a single word processor, and a sewing machine. After children have finished writing, typing, illustration, and printing their stories with a word processor, the teacher laminates the covers, and then sets a sewing machine on the longest stitch "and zip[s] the book right through" (p.679). Simic (1993) and Manning (1998) note that many of these kinds of "real" books are displayed in both school and public libraries and are often the most popular with other students (Manning, 1998).

Some teachers are fortunate enough to have publishing centers set up in their schools to meet the growing need to publish student authors. Nedeff, Brady, Maxwell, Oaks and Seckel (1994) describe a *Students as Authors Project*, which encourages writing, illustration, and publishing books of all genres *by* children *for* children. Their Worlds of a Reader's Mind publishing Company (WORM) publishes books that are sold to families and community members as well as at school functions. Massey (1995), an Ohio principal and former language arts teacher, developed a publishing center to encourage rural elementary students to write. Using donated computer equipment and supplies, Massey estimates that since 1990 over 1,500 original books and poems have been published in their shop (pp. 36-38). With formal "real books" or informal classroom displays, through small-scale production methods or school-wide publishing centers, teachers have found creative ways to publish individual authors.

3. Classbooks

A classbook is a collection of children's individual writings or the class writing together, using the same topic or theme (Scott, 1994). Scott (1994) believes that classbooks can serve as an effective and enjoyable tool for communicating with parents as well as for inviting them to be a part of their children's school life. Langfit (1994) integrates music, reading, and writing in her classbooks. Beginning with a verse of a popular children's tune (such as *The Farmer in the Dell*), Langfit has her students personalize each verse by completing a given phrase set to the melody. Langfit then compiles the verses into a classbook and integrates it into her curriculum by reading a piece of children's literature that relates to the theme of the tune/verses. She notes that through pattern, melody, and illustration, emergent and beginning readers can proudly read their new creations independently (p.431).

4. Classroom and School Newspapers

Classroom or school newspapers can also serve as a channel to encourage children's authorship. Lund and Sanderson (1999) describe how a single computer can be used to turn an ordinary newspaper into a multimedia event, including sound, graphics, and video, through the use of a HyperStudio software package. Lund and Sanderson found that as a group of second grade students wrote their articles, stories, and jokes, their writing skills are improved.

Lund & Sanderson (1999) also advocate creating newspapers, stating that "encouraging students to read and write in ways that allow them to make sense of real language in real contexts is more likely to help them develop the skills necessary to become fluent readers and writers." (p.2). McCann (1992) investigates the role of school newspaper in strengthening communication between parents and students. The findings of this research reveal that parents felt better informed and noticed improvement in their child's writing skills.

5. Young Author's Conferences

Sharing one's writing through young author's conferences is a common way for children to affirm authorship, as well as to reach audience beyond the classroom walls. Young author's conferences may take different forms, but they often involve children reading their writing to an audience other than just their classmates and teachers. It usually takes place in the school's auditorium or classrooms, where parents, other children, and even sometimes invited authors of children's literature listen to the written work by the child authors. Simic (1993) asserts that an "acknowledgement of good writing, whether it is peer or adult, helps build an awareness of the importance of writing" (p.1). She goes on to say, "these celebrations of authorship to the process writing curriculum generate excitement about writing, and they promote more writing in classrooms" (1993, p.1).

The Role of Technology and Computer in Publishing Children's Writing

Baker (2000) and Daiute (2003) advocate linking technology and literacy. Baker (200) summarizes the work of Anderson-Inman (1997), Gallini and Helman (1995), and Guhlin (1996) and writes that "the impact of the World Wide Web and electronic communication on development of writing abilities indicates that through Internet technologies, student can find support for their writing efforts, increase their awareness of audience and gain useful feedback" (p.2).

One type of electronic communication is a student-designed school website. Eagleton (1999) describes the creation of such a site while offering insight to K-12 teachers on the inclusion of technology into the literacy curriculum. Eagleton (1999) argues that "if my goals also include motivating and engaging students, encouraging collaboration, and providing students with an authentic sense of audience when they write, then it would most definitely be appropriate for me to incorporate hypermedia design projects and the internet into my curriculum" (p.2).

Other researchers agree with Eagleton, citing the importance of utilizing technology when publishing students' work. Iannone (1998) presents and discusses a list of World Wide Web sites and offers suggestions on how to utilize them to create writing-centered literacy experiences. Hensel (1997) provides information on how to maintain a school website, and Collins and Collins (1996) discuss a project called Web66 in which a Minnesota elementary school utilized the internet to provide a medium for student publishing as well as a communicative and collaborative tool. In yet another example, Neal (1995) describes a study which used the Web as a research and publication tool in a fifth grade curriculum project. All of these researchers agree that available technology facilitates publication and allows for relevant, authentic authorship experiences which enhance writing skills.

Conclusion

Balcer (1990) suggests that the attitudes that teachers instill in students during the writing process should weigh more than the methods that teachers employ to help students' publication. "That means treating students to that final and ultimate writerly pleasure of finding their words come alive in the faces of their listeners and their readers" (Willinsky, 1985). Whatever the chosen method, teachers can rest assured that when they publish their students' work, they will not only see improvement in their students' writing skills but also witness their sense of satisfaction and heightened self-esteem as they make their writing public.

Internet Resources

Author's Chair
http://schools.spsd.sk.ca/DE/PD/instr/strats/author/

Children Writing & Publishing
http://www.scils.rutgers.edu/~kvander/ChildrenLit/childpublishing.html

Writing Workshop: Publishing Children's Writing
http://www.springfield.k12.il.us/resources/languagearts/readingwriting/publish/periodicpubl.htm

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